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Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

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Military System Under Delhi Sultanate (12th century to 16th century): A Historical Study

A Synopsis

Submitted in

Partial fulfillment for the degree of

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DECLARATION

I, Naveen hereby declare that all the statement made in this application are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and in the event of any information being found false or incorrect or any ineligibility being detected before or after the registration for Ph.D. My candidature is liable to be cancelled and legal action may be initiated against me.

I have deposited the required fee, as notified by the University regularly.

I have noted that if my application is found incomplete / defective, the same is liable to be rejected summarily and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.

I have read and agree with the University Revised Ph.D. Ordinance No. 14 and UGC Regulation – 2009, and all the Amended Regulations or newly passed Regulations by the UGC on or before the mentioned date.

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INDEX

S. No.	Particulars	Page No.
1.	Introduction	03
2.	Reasearch objectives	04
3.	Review of literature	05-08
4.	Reaserch Gaps	09
5.	Reasearch Methodology and Materials	10
6.	Expected outcome of the purposed reasearch	11
7.	Reference	12

Military System Under Delhi Sultanate (12th century to 16th century): A Historical Study

The Delhi Sultanate, established in the early 13th century, marked the beginning of Muslim rule in northern India. Its first ruling dynasty, the Mamluk Dynasty which is also known as the Slave Dynasty, reigned from 1206 to 1290. After the Mamluk Dynasty, Khilji dynasty, Tughlaq dynasty , Sayyid dynasty and Lody dynasty succeeded the Delhi sultanate. Before the Delhi Sultanate, the military system in India was primarily based on regional kingdoms, dynastic rule, and feudal structures. Armies mainly consisted of infantry, cavalry, elephants, and archers. Infantry, made up of peasants and local warriors, formed the bulk of the forces. Cavalry was present but not as much advanced as the Central Asian armies. All though Rajputs and some Deccan kingdoms maintained strong horse-mounted units. But the Delhi sultanate changed the previous miltey system. Rulers of Delhi Sultanate made a strong military System to protect their territories. The Delhi Sultanate spans from the 12th to the 16th century. It established a robust military system that was pivotal in both consolidating power and expanding territorial boundaries. The Sultans, acting as supreme commanders, relied heavily on their military prowess to maintain authority and suppress internal dissent. The military was primarily organized into three main divisions: the cavalry, infantry, and elephant corps. The cavalry held the most esteemed position which reflected the Central Asian nomadic traditions of the ruling class. Cavalrymen were categorized based on the number of horses they possessed: those with two horses (do-aspa) and those with one (ek-aspa). The infantry, comprising mainly Indian Muslims, Hindus, and slaves, was equipped with spears, swords, and bows and arrows. The elephant corps, featuring elephants fitted with wooden structures (haudas) to carry multiple fighters . It played a significant role in battles, especially in the earlier periods.

The administrative framework overseeing the military was centralized under the Sultan's authority. The Diwan-i-Arz, led by the Ariz-i-Mumalik, was the department responsible for military affairs. This department managed the recruitment of soldiers, maintenance of discipline, and ensured the army's overall readiness. To maintain control over the military, the Sultan's bodyguards and the troops stationed in the capital formed the standing army, which was supplemented by contingents from provincial governors and nobles during times of need. Several Sultans introduced notable military reforms to enhance efficiency and loyalty. Alauddin Khalji, for example, was the first Sultan to implement cash payments to soldiers, which reduced the dependence on land grants and minimised the influence of feudal lords. He introduced the practices of branding horses (dagh) and maintaining descriptive rolls of soldiers (huliya) to prevent corruption and ensure the authenticity of the troops. These measures aimed to create a more centralized and loyal military structure. However, all reforms had no lasting positive impacts. Firoz Shah Tughlaq, for instance, granted hereditary assignments of land to soldiers, making military ranks hereditary. These changes led to the feudalization of the army, undermining its effectiveness and loyalty to the central authority. Under the Lodi dynasty, the army's organization became tribal-based. That further weakened its structure and contributed to the decline of the Sultanate. Throughout its existence, the Delhi Sultanate faced numerous military challenges, including Mongol invasions and internal rebellions. The effectiveness of the military system varied under different rulers. This influenced the Sultanate's ability to maintain control and project power across the Indian subcontinent. Different dynasties of Delhi Sultanate have a unique and strong military System. The Mamluk Dynasty (1206–1290), also known as the Slave Dynasty, established a robust military system that was foundational to the Delhi Sultanate's consolidation and expansion in India. Central to this system was the Iqta' system, an administrative mechanism where land revenues were assigned to military

officers (muqtis or iqtadars) in exchange for their service. This system ensured a steady supply of troops and resources for the Sultanate.

Shamsuddin Iltutmish, the third ruler of the Mamluk Dynasty, played a pivotal role in organizing a central recruited, paid, and managed army. He implemented the iqta system, assigning land revenues to his Turkic officers in exchange for military service and political loyalty. To prevent the emergence of regional power bases, Iltutmish regularly transferred iqta holders, ensuring their roles remained bureaucratic rather than feudal. Another significant aspect of the Mamluk military structure was the Corps of Forty which was called Turkan-e-Chahalgani, a council of 40 Turkic slave emirs established by Iltutmish. This elite group held substantial administrative and military authority. They influenced the Sultanate's governance. Whereas on the other hand the Khilji Dynasty (1290–1320) introduced significant reforms to the military system of the Delhi Sultanate, particularly under the rule of Sultan Alauddin Khilji. Alauddin implemented measures to strengthen and maintain a large standing army, crucial for defending the Sultanate against external threats like the Mongol invasions and for expanding ihos territories. Alauddin Khilji established a substantial standing army, with estimates ranging between 300,000 to 400,000 cavalry and 2,500 to 3,000 elephants for war. To support his military, Alauddin implemented stringent economic policies. He raised agricultural taxes from 20% to 50%, payable in grain or cash, and eliminated intermediaries in tax collection. These measures ensured a steady revenue stream to fund the army.Under Alauddin's leadership, the Khilji dynasty expanded the Sultanate's territories through several successful military campaigns. His generals, such as Malik Kafur and Khusro Khan, led expeditions into southern India. They amassined significant wealth and resources, including the famed Koh-i-Noor diamond from there. These

campaigns not only expanded the Sultanate's domain but also proved the effectiveness of Alauddin's military reforms.

The Tughlaq rulers implemented several notable military and administrative reforms.

They introduced the iqta system which Builds upon previous practices. The Tughlaqs refined the iqta system , a land revenue assignment mechanism where military officers (muqtis or iqtadars) were granted rights to collect taxes from specific territories in lieu of salaries. This system ensured a steady revenue stream for maintaining troops and administrative functions. However, over time, the hereditary nature of these assignments led to decentralization and challenges to central authority. The Sayyid dynasty faced numerous challenges, including internal dissent and external threats, which influenced their military strategies. They adopted the policy of reliance on Nobility. Lacking a robust central army, the Sayyid rulers depended heavily on regional nobles and their private militias for military support. This reliance often led to fragmented authority and difficulties in mobilizing unified military responses.

The Lodi dynasty, the last of the Delhi Sultanate before the Mughal conquest, introduced reforms to strengthen their military apparatus. The Lodis endeavored to centralize military command by reducing the power of regional chiefs and integrating their forces into the Sultanate's army. This move aimed to create a more cohesive and controllable military force.

To ensure a stable revenue base for military expenditures, the Lodis implemented agrarian reforms, standardizing land revenue assessments and reducing the intermediaries in tax collection.

Each dynasty of Delhi Sultanate made a strong military System to protect their territories and strengthen the government. Through a strong military System

they are able to fight against other rulers as well as it helps them to extend their kingdom.

Objectives :

- To understand the influence of the military system on the Sultanate's expansion, stability, and decline.
- To analyze the organizational military structure under different rulers of the Delhi Sultanate.

Research Questions:

- How did the technological advancements in wartime during the Sultanate period influence the outcomes of their military engagements**?**
- How did the composition and diversity of the Sultanate's army reflect the sociopolitical dynamics of medieval India?
- What role did the Diwan-i-Arz play in the military administration of the Delhi Sultanate, and how did it evolve under different rulers?
- In what ways did the economic policies of the Delhi Sultanate support or obstruct its military campaigns and expansions?
- In what ways did the Mongol invasions influence the military strategies and defensive measures of the Delhi Sultanate.

Importance And Scope :

The study will cover the period from 1206 to 1526. It starts with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate by Qutb al-Din Aibak and ends with the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi at the Battle of Panipat. The study will focus on the territories controlled by the Delhi Sultanate which include modern-day North India, parts of Central India, and the Deccan. It will also consider military interactions with neighboring regions, including the Mongols, the Rajputs , and

Southern Indian dynasties. It talks about the key military campaigns under rulers like Iltutmish, Balban, Alauddin Khilji, and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. It explores defensive strategies against Mongol invasions and internal rebellions.

Research Problems :

Many primary sources, such as chronicles and administrative records, are either lost or incomplete. Existing texts are sometimes biased, written from the perspective of court historians, which may distort the actual military history. There is a lack of archaeological evidence to corroborate written records about military practices, weapons, and fortifications. Persian and Arabic chronicles often reflect the political and religious outlook of the ruling elite class, leading to potential exaggeration of details.

Differences in the interpretation of the same events by different historians create conflicting narratives about the effectiveness of the military system. Lacking of indigenous sources present the perspective of local communities affected by military campaigns. There are limited records on the role of non-Muslim soldiers, auxiliary forces, and local levies in the military.

Limitations:

This research work will cover only the military strategy of Delhi Sultanate. Other important aspects like political, social and religious factors are not discussed in this research work. This study will focus on translated sources because of not knowing Persian and Arabic. Lack of direct evidence of this topic is a major limitation of this work.

Literature Review:

Ali, Athar. Army Organization, Military Technology and Warfare during the Delhi Sultanate. Indian Books and Periodicals, 2023.

This book is a comprehensive examination of the military practices in India before and during the Delhi Sultanate. The book investigates the traditional Indian methods of warfare prior to the Ghorid conquest. It highlights their shortcomings compared to Turkish military strategies. It also delves into the evolution of military technology and its application in battle tactics, siege operations, and fort defense during the Sultanate era. The author explores various facets of military history. It includes administration, strategies, technological advancements, and the logistical aspects of fortifications. The pursuit of a high-quality army led to the recruitment of skilled soldiers, initially favoring Turks, Tajiks, and Afghans.

Jackson, Peter. The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the political and military developments of the Delhi Sultanate from its establishment in 1206 to its decline in the early 16th century. The author explores the political strategies, administrative structures, and military organization of the Sultanate, focusing on the rise and fall of the Mamluk, Khalji, Tughlaq, Sayyid, and Lodhi dynasties. He examines how the Ghurid conquests led to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, highlighting the role of military strength and political strategy in consolidating power. This book details the composition and functioning of the Sultanate's army, including the recruitment of Turkish, Afghan, and Indian soldiers, the use of war elephants, and the employment of Mongol military tactics.

Sharma, S.R. The Military System of the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526). Oxford University Press, 1958.

This book provides a detailed analysis of the military structure, strategies, and organization of the Sultanate from its establishment under the Mamluks to the

end of the Lodi dynasty. Sharma explores how military strength was central to the rise and consolidation of power by the Sultans. It focused on recruitment, weaponry, battle tactics, and the role of the military elite. The book emphasizes the importance of cavalry, which formed the backbone of the Sultanate's military strength, along with the use of war elephants and foot soldiers in battle.

Wink, André. Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Vol. II: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries. Brill, 1997.

This book explores the early phase of Islamic expansion into the Indian subcontinent, focusing on the period from the early 11th to the 13th centuries, which saw the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate under the Slave also known as Mamluk dynasty. Wink examines the political, military, and cultural dynamics that shaped the early Indo-Islamic world. It highlights the interaction between Islamic and Indian traditions. The writer highlights the reliance on cavalry, archery, and siege warfare, as well as the adoption of Persian and Central Asian military techniques. The role of slave soldiers (ghulams) and the iqta system in maintaining military strength is also discussed in this book.

Eaton, Richard M. "Review of Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World: Volume II: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries." The International History Review, 1998.

This research work offers a comprehensive analysis of Wink's work on the expansion of Islam in South and Southeast Asia during the early 11th century to 13th century. Eaton acknowledges the book's extensive research and wide-ranging scope, noting its significant contribution to understanding the formation of the Indo-Islamic world within a broader geo-cultural context. He points out that numismatic evidence indicates a highly monetized Indian economy prior to the Turkic conquests, suggesting that the economic revitalization might not be solely attributed to the iqta system. Additionally, Eaton critiques Wink's

methodology, particularly the juxtaposition of sources from different periods without adequate contextualization.

Digby, Simon. War-Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies. Orient Monographs, 1971.

This book examines the logistics and supply systems that supported the military operations of the Delhi Sultanate. Digby focuses on the central role played by horses and elephants in the Sultanate's military strategy, exploring how these animals were found, maintained, and integrated into the Sultanate's military framework. The author highlights the significance of cavalry and war elephants in the Sultanate's military campaigns. Horses were critical for mobility and shock tactics, while on the other hand elephants were used to break enemy formations and create psychological fear on the battlefield.

Research Methodology:

The study will adopt a historical research design, focusing on the collection, evaluation, and interpretation of historical data related to the military system of the Delhi Sultanate from 1206–1526. The research will primarily involve qualitative methods to analyze historical texts, military records, and secondary sources.

Primary Sources:

- Historical Chronicles – Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit texts including works by Ziauddin Barani (Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi), Minhaj-us-Siraj (Tabaqat-i-Nasiri), Amir Khusrau, and Ibn Battuta's travel accounts.
- Epigraphic Records – Inscriptions and coins from the period.
- Farmans and Administrative Documents – Orders and administrative records related to the military system.

- Archaeological Evidence – Fortifications, weapons, and remains of military structures.

Secondary Sources:

- Books and Research Papers – Published works by historians on the Delhi Sultanate's military structure and administration.
- Journal Articles – Scholarly articles analyzing military organization, cavalry, infantry, and technological advancements.

Data Collection Techniques:

- Library and Archival Research – Consultation of archives, libraries, and historical institutions to collect primary and secondary data.
- Field Visits – Visits to historical sites and museums to analyze military artifacts and architectural structures.
- Document Analysis – Systematic examination of chronicles, farmans, and historical texts to extract relevant information.

Expected Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will give the Overview of the Delhi Sultanate; importance of military in state formation and expansion; objectives of the study.

1. Background and Rise of the Delhi Sultanate
2. Political and Military Context of Northern India
3. Sources and Historiography

Chapter 2: Military Organization and Structure

This chapter will discuss the composition of army; hierarchy; recruitment methods of soldiers; roles of infantry, cavalry, and commanders in expanding Delhi Sultanate.

- Composition of the Army (Cavalry, Infantry, Archers, Elephants)
- Recruitment and Training Methods
- Role of Nobility and Iqta Holders

Chapter 3: Military Strategy and Tactics

This chapter will Study the battle plans ,fort formations, weapons, and warfare techniques used by the Sultanate

- Fortifications and Defensive Strategies
- Battlefield Formations and Maneuvers
- Use of Technology and Weaponry

Chapter 4 : Role of the Sultan and their Military Leadership in expanding empire:

This chapter wil provide analysis of sultans' strategic leadership; campaigns and conquests. Which play a great role in empire expansion.

- Role of Commanders and Nobility
- Court Politics and Military Influence

Chapter 5:Results & Outcome:

This chapter establishes the political fragmentation of Northern India prior to the Sultanate and contextualizes the rise of Turkish and Afghan powers. It outlines the key sources—like Ziauddin Barani, Minhaj-i-Siraj, and archaeological findings—and reviews scholarly interpretations. This sets the foundation for analyzing the Sultanate's unique military structure.

- Success of innovations by key sultans.
- Importance of Iqta, standing army, and dagh-o-chehra.
- Adaptation against Mongols and rebellions.
- Influence on later empires, especially the Mughals.

Chapter 6: conclusion

This chapter will give the Summary of study; role of military in Sultanate's success; long-term influence on Indian polity.

- Legacy of the Delhi Sultanate's Military System
- Influence on Later Indian Military Practices

Expected Timeline:

Year 1: Planning and Literature Review:

- Months 1–3 – Research Design and Planning
- Define research objectives and key questions.
- Identify primary and secondary sources (e.g., historical chronicles, archaeological findings, previous research).
- Develop a clear research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed**).**

Year 2: Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis

Months 1–6 – Data Collection

Collect data from archives, libraries, and other historical sources.

If possible, visit historical sites related to the Delhi Sultanate's military infrastructure.

Translate and transcribe key primary sources (if necessary).

- Months 7–12 – Initial Analysis
- Analyze the military structure (organization, cavalry, infantry, weapons, supply chains).
- Compared with contemporary military systems (Mongols, Rajputs, South Indian kingdoms).
- Start drafting detailed notes and organizing them by theme.

Year 3: Writing and Detailed Analysis

- Months 1–6 – Draft Core Chapters
- Military Organization and Structure
- Recruitment and Training
- Weapons and Technology
- Strategies and Tactics
- Key Military Campaigns

Months 7–12 – Thematic and Comparative Analysis

- Incorporate comparative insights with other military systems.
- Refine arguments and ensure historical accuracy.
- Seek feedback from advisors or peers.

Year 4: Finalization and Submission

- Months 1–6 – Refinement and Peer Review
- Revise drafts based on feedback.
- Ensure consistent citation and formatting (follow style guidelines).
- Address any remaining gaps.

Months 7–12 – Final Submission and Defense

- Complete final draft for proofreading and formatting.
- Submit the thesis.
- Prepare for the viva or defense.

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